

# Land Conservation Update

## *A Review of the Loudoun County PDR Program*

August 2003

### Land Protected Through the PDR Program

The Loudoun County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program is a land conservation program that compensates property owners who voluntarily agree to sell the right to develop their land. Established by the Board of Supervisors in 2000, the PDR Program was created as a way to preserve the county's valuable farmland and to protect the county's diverse natural, historic and scenic resources.

Since February 2002, the PDR Program has completed the acquisition of eight conservation easements and the Board of Supervisors has approved the purchase of six additional easements. The 14 easements will protect more than 3,135 acres (4.9 square miles) and commit \$8.4 million (\$2,684 per acre) from the County's Open Space Preservation Fund.

**Table 1: PDR Program Easement Acquisitions (2002-2003)**

Property	Location	Status	Acres
1 Burkgren Family	Ashburn	Complete	27
2 Talbot Farm	Waterford	Complete	215
3 Bradley Farm	Lincoln	Complete	52
4 Edgehill Farm	Taylorstown	Complete	186
5 Old Welbourne	Bloomfield	Complete	379
6 White Farm	Middleburg	Complete	133
7 Stoke Farm	Aldie	Complete	165
8 Warren Family Farm	Aldie	Complete	283
9 Sage Hill Farm	Leesburg	In Progress	125
10 Wise Family	Ashburn	In Progress	9
11 Leggett Foundation	Between the Hills	In Progress	893
12 Oakland	Waterford	In Progress	415
13 Great Country Farms	Bluemont	In Progress	184
14 Oatlands / National Trust	Leesburg	In Progress	68
<b>Total Acreage</b>			<b>3135</b>

### Resource Conservation Benefits

The conservation easement purchases approved by the Board of Supervisors will protect a wide diversity of natural, historic, scenic, and agricultural resources. An overview of the resources protected include the following:

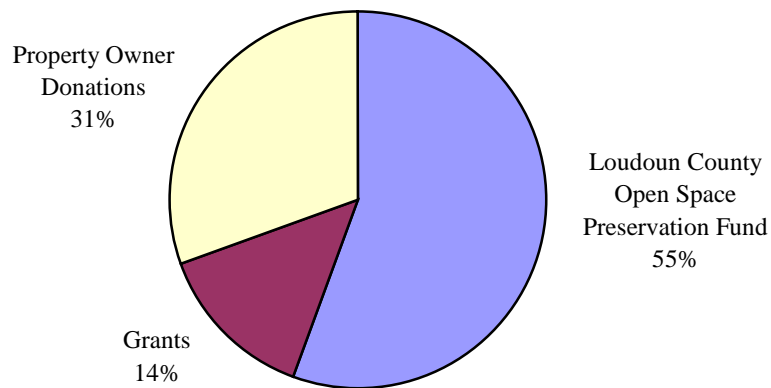
- 1. Historic Resources**—Preservation of 267 acres within designated historic districts (Goose Creek Historic District and Waterford Historic Landmark District). The PDR Program will also preserve a 165 acre site eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, a 68 acre site that will preserve the historic character of the landscape around Oatlands Plantation, as well as two additional sites, totaling 540 acres, that are likely eligible for the Register.
- 2. Important Natural Habitats**—Protection of three sites, totaling 1,150 acres, that the Virginia Natural Heritage Program has identified as important natural habitats.
- 3. Water Quality**—Preservation of 6.66 miles of stream frontage along Loudoun County's major stream corridors, including frontage along Goose Creek, an important source of drinking water.
- 4. Scenic Character**—Preservation of six sites along Scenic Byways designated by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Acquiring easements on these sites will protect over 1,598 acres of Loudoun County's scenic rural landscape along these designated byways.
- 5. Productive Farmland**—Preservation of nearly 1,200 acres of prime and secondary farmland, the foundation for a productive rural economy in the future.

For more information about the PDR Program, contact Michael Kane, Program Manager at 703-737-8868 or [mkane@loudoun.gov](mailto:mkane@loudoun.gov) or check the PDR Program web site at <http://www.loudoun.gov/omagi/pdr/index.htm>.

## Leveraging County Funds

Loudoun County is not alone in recognizing the need to preserve critical land and resources. The County is working in partnership with other organizations to leverage County funds with grants from the Federal government and private organizations, like the James Rowley Goose Creek Fund. Overall, the County's commitment of \$8.4 million for the 14 easement purchases represents only 55 percent of the estimated \$15.1 million value of the easements. In addition to grant funds, all of the easement acquisitions involve a bargain sale, whereby the property owner agrees to accept less than the appraised fair market value of the easement.

**Figure 1: Funding for PDR Program Easement Acquisitions  
(Leveraging County Funds with Grants and Donations)**



## Shaping the Pattern of Urban Development

Three of the conservation easement acquisitions approved by the Board will protect 161 acres of open space in Loudoun County's development districts, near Ashburn and Leesburg. Preservation of these sites will further efforts to protect the scenic character of the Potomac River and the W&OD trail, corridors that possess important natural and recreational resources in the County.

## Recreational Benefits

Loudoun County's easement acquisitions will provide opportunities for residents to experience—firsthand—the resources protected through the PDR Program. For example, there will be public access to the property owned by the Leggett Foundation, making nearly 900 acres Between the Hills available to the public for hiking and environmental education. Through the PDR Program, the County is also acquiring easements for the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail.

## Benefits to Taxpayers

The Loudoun County PDR Program offers a good long-term financial investment to all taxpayers because—by extinguishing development rights—the County avoids the cost of providing services to new residential development. It is estimated that approximately 564 development rights will be permanently extinguished by acquiring conservation easements on the 14 properties preserved through the PDR Program. If these properties were developed, the estimated cost to the County for just capital facilities—schools, libraries, and the like—would exceed \$12 million or 43 percent more than the County funds used to preserve the 14 properties.

### ***PDR Program Fall 2003 Application Period***

The Loudoun County PDR Program is accepting applications from property owners that are interested in applying for the PDR Program's Fall 2003 application period. The deadline to submit a Preliminary Application to the program is November 30, 2003.

The Fall 2003 acquisition cycle will be the first initiated since the Board of Supervisors adopted changes to the PDR Program in July 2003. Under the revised program, the PDR Board will be placing a priority on properties located in suburban areas and sites that possess important historical, natural, and cultural resources.

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